

DOTING THE DOCTRINE - A CASE FOR MORE ROLE ORIENTED TRAINING

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Two publications of recent times, which arguably made a perceptible impact on the thinking and understanding of Naval personnel about their Service and its role, objectives, missions and tasks towards national security are the Indian Maritime Doctrine (2004 and 2009 editions) and Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy (2007). Though intended to facilitate a larger understanding amongst the public, Government services and other Armed Forces, they have served a much worthy cause by providing an easy reference to every man and woman in the white uniform to understand the raison d'être of his/her work and its contribution to the Service. The Indian Navy today operates in a complex paradigm spanning the Military, Diplomatic, Constabulary and Benign roles. The proportion of operations each of these roles has occupied has been a fine balancing act with the temporal focus and deployment of assets varying as per the established prioritisation.



The inherent attributes of maritime power such as access, mobility, sustenance, reach, flexibility and versatility allow us to apply it to differing situations to meet diverse requirements. This is the unique quality of maritime power vis-a-vis land based power which allows it to deliver over a wide range of tasks and missions. However, a closer look at the nature of operations undertaken in the recent past, say over the last decade, will lead us to conclude that the Diplomatic and Constabulary roles have assumed a dominant place in our current scheme of things. The case being put forth in this article is based on a simple question that could be posed in light of this reality, "Is Naval training adequately geared up to address the peculiar requirements of roles other than Military?" To get our answers, we must take a closer look at a few facts.

The Man-of-War as a Diplomat

The Diplomatic Role is perhaps the most visible and well advertised role of the Navy. In fact, India's Maritime Military Strategy (2007) states that the main business of major Navies in the 21st Century is to use warships to support foreign policy by less violent methods. During the long years of peace, we need to project power and show presence; catalyse partnerships, build trust and create interoperability through combined operations and international maritime assistance. Maritime Diplomacy covers all those issues which further national aims and objectives and is, therefore, one of the Indian Navy's major peacetime tasks. The number of ships and aircraft proceeding for Overseas Deployments and mutually agreed cooperative maritime missions with friendly maritime neighbours has seen a steady rise over the years. While performing the Diplomatic role, warships could be expected to contribute to a variety of tasks such as Flag Showing, Port Calls, technical and logistics assistance, training of friendly foreign personnel, bilateral exercises, Out-of-Area-Contingencies, Non-combatant Evacuation Operations, Peace Enforcement, Peace Making, Peace Keeping, Peace Building and other related tasks. The natural question that arises on this wide variety of tasks is, "Where in our training

programmes, for Officers or Sailors; or in operational training for ship's crew, do we factor in the skills necessary for meeting the full range of demands of the Diplomatic role?" The responses to this rhetorical question could be subject to individual interpretation. But just in order to provide some food for thought, the following areas of potential enhancement are suggested, which bear relevance to this role-oriented training.

- **Operational Skills.** The operational aspects of engaging with foreign maritime forces, such as Navies or Coast Guards cover issues such as; joint planning, joint exercises, joint operations, cross embarkations etc. There are typical procedures, often unique to a Navy or a Coast Guard (eg TABORDS), which hold immense value in the success of such joint efforts. The experience gained during bilateral exercises such as Varuna, Malabar, SIMBEX or Indra needs to be capitalised upon by deriving valuable lessons pertaining to tactical planning etc., which could be disseminated to Officer trainees at specialist level or during CO/XO PCT courses. Likewise, our Navy has a rich experience of cooperative maritime security operations with the maritime agencies of neighbouring countries such as Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius. The operational lessons from these type of engagements need to be filtered out of post mission debriefs and reports, to be assimilated for the purpose of training.

- **Technical and Logistics.** Technical support and operational logistics assume a complicated dimension in the context of deployment of ships or aircraft detachments to foreign shores. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is an area of interest and much of our operations are encompassed within this extended neighbourhood. There are a handful of ports in the IOR where our ships frequently call for Operational Turnaround (OTR) or Flag Showing missions. It is possible to derive significant lessons from the experience gained over a period of time in managing issues pertaining to technical and logistics support available at various ports in the IOR. The procedures involved in sourcing such help through diplomatic channels





are not commonly known to those who have not 'been there and done that'. This kind of niche knowledge could be disseminated to Officer trainees of Engineering and Logistics Branches undergoing courses at a specialist or sub specialist level. The devil often lies in the detail. For instance, it may certainly not be a pleasant prospect for a Commanding Officer, sailing his ship for an overseas mission, to receive a blank response from a young Engineer Officer or a Logistics Officer to a hypothetical question like, "Chief, is there a way for us to get our AC plant motor rewinded at this port?" or "I understand the new Gunnery Officer has reported as a 'wait-shipper' back home, is there a provision for us to fly him to this port, given the critical nature and long duration of our mission?"

▪ **Cultural Issues.** Cultural issues pertaining to the host country or province assume an important dimension in the overarching considerations related to missions under Diplomatic role such as Flag Showing, Peace Keeping or simple Port Calls. There are peculiar customs and socio-cultural attributes of different communities which need to be borne in mind while interacting with the hosts. In the age of the Internet, it is relatively easy to gather information of generic nature, but only experience will bring home lessons of subtle nature, for example working hours of the local Government, linguistic preferences, religious sensitivities and the like. Also, some of the IOR states with whom we regularly interact are French speaking. So, will it not help to have onboard personnel with at least a preliminary exposure to French or other native languages, to bring more effect to missions under Diplomatic role? But do we factor in such cultural issues in our training?

Policing at Sea

Having seen how the Diplomatic role has posed fresh challenges in terms of training, let us move to the next role which is making news—the Constabulary role. The IN has been contributing to anti-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean, ever since the problem of piracy emanating from the coast of Somalia assumed serious proportion after 2006. After the Mumbai terrorist attacks of '26/11',

the added responsibility of the nation's coastal security coordination, involving multiple stakeholders, has been vested with the Navy. This has necessitated a round the clock involvement in 'brown water' operations too. Anti-piracy and other policing operations have arguably complicated the tasking of operational units available for such missions. But do our training programmes adequately address the demands of such operations under the Constabulary role? For instance, how many of us are familiar with the Maritime Zones of India Act, 1976 and the Maritime Zones of India (Regulation of Fishing by Foreign Fishing Vessels) Act, 1981 which empowers Naval Officers, in addition to the Coast Guard, to take action against offenders? For that matter, where have we catered for a feedback loop in our training mechanism to make sure that the valuable lessons learnt by the intrepid IN ships, which arrested and managed the custody of pirates in the recent past, are 'ploughed back' for the general benefit of others, who are likely to undertake similar missions? Weren't there any lessons to be learnt in terms of evidence collection or evidence preservation? Did the case stand well in the court? Is there a feedback loop for the benefit of training?

Increasing policing work at sea, involving missions as diverse as anti-poaching, anti-smuggling or counter-infiltration has placed new demands on the skills and knowledge base of Naval Officers, who are now expected to perform certain functions which were traditionally performed by the Coast Guard. Our training syllabi need to become responsive to this new reality.

Conclusion

Hitherto, much of the focus of training in the IN is concentrated on the Military Role, and rightly so, because that is the primary role envisaged for a Maritime Armed Force. However, the changing dynamics of the prevailing threat scenario have altered this premise to a considerable degree. There is a need for Naval training to adapt and deliver in accordance with the emerging demands of the Diplomatic and Constabulary roles, as discussed above. A good example of such responsiveness





could be cited in the institution of 'Disaster Management' training, which has been incorporated as an integral component of 'Work Up' of ships. This could be described as the recognition of emergent training requirements in the Benign role. With this tradition of timely responsiveness in

the backdrop, it would be logical and prudent of us to adapt to the new challenges posed in the Diplomatic and Constabulary domains, so that the IN continues to deliver across a broad spectrum of responsibilities, diverse in scope and complexity, spatially ranging from the brown to blue waters.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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PORT CALL



Indian Naval Ship docked at Queen's Wharf, Wellington

